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ABSTRACT

Some schools struggle to implement comprehensive school reform, whereas others succeed. The difference usually is that the successful schools use a combination of effective change strategies. This issue lists six strategies for change that can nearly guarantee success: (1) developing an atmosphere and context conducive to change; (2) developing and communicating a shared vision; (3) planning and providing resources; (4) investing in professional development; (5) monitoring and checking progress; and (6) continuing to give assistance. This issue examines the first three strategies a facilitative leader can use to bring about school change through implementation of a comprehensive school reform program. Case studies of two elementary schools (both Title I, K-5 schools in the same state) illustrate how these strategies were applied. The issue also supplies a discussion of the strategies. Subsections include what principals can do to promote school change and the role of a superintendent in creating a climate for change. An article on "Networking Begins at http://www.CSRDweb.net" by Lacy Wood ends the issue. (DFR)

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Strategies for Change: Implementing a Comprehensive School Reform Program

By Leslie Blair

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There probably is not any one strategy that ensures a school will do well implementing comprehensive school reform; rather a combination of strategies can help ensure a school's success.

Sierra Vista and Sunrise Elementary are both Title I, K-5 schools in the same state. Both serve approximately 600 students and both have struggled to improve student achievement and attendance during the past five years. Several years ago each school decided to initiate a comprehensive school reform (CSR) program. The schools' CSR programs included adoption of the same national reform model. After the first two years of implementing its program, Sierra Vista staff strongly believed they were headed in the right direction, as indicated by a change in student and teacher attitude — everyone seemed energized and enthusiastic, and a new spirit of collaboration pervaded the campus. The school also saw some small improvements in standardized test scores. But after two years of implementing its reform program, Sunrise staff decided to drop the program. Teachers felt burned out and overwhelmed, and were disappointed that test scores had not shown dramatic improvement.

Why did one school do so well with their CSR program, while the other floundered? There probably is not any one strategy that ensures a school will do well implementing comprehensive school reform; rather it takes a combination of strategies to help ensure a school's success.

The strategies that we are going to discuss in this issue of Connections, *and in the next issue as well, are strategies that can nearly guarantee success. They focus on eliminating the barriers that can hinder school reform and success. However, implementing these strategies and the reform process takes leadership—facilitative leadership—to ensure the strategies are carried out. This means the burden of leadership for the reform effort may lie with the principal and superintendent, although others play leadership roles throughout the reform process. A principal*

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Strategies for Change, *continued from page 1*

who is a facilitative leader will encourage teachers to take on many of these leadership roles. It should be noted that teachers have the most important role of all — carrying out reform efforts at the classroom level.

In 1992, based on her work and that of her colleagues, researcher Shirley Hord described the actions that a facilitative leader can take to foster school change:

- *developing an atmosphere and context conducive to change,*
- *developing and communicating a shared vision,*
- *planning and providing resources,*
- *investing in professional development,*
- *monitoring and checking progress, and*
- *continuing to give assistance.*[1]

It is important to recognize that school reform is a PROCESS; therefore these steps are not necessarily linear, but ongoing and overlapping.

In this issue of Connections, *we will examine the first three strategies a facilitative leader can use to bring about school change to successfully implement a comprehensive school reform program, and we will see how these strategies played out at Sunrise and Sierra Vista schools. Keep these strategies in mind as you read through the stories of Sunrise and Sierra Vista that begin on page 3 and as you read the discussion of the strategies that begins on page 5.*

In the next issue of Connections, *we will focus on the fourth, fifth, and sixth strategies a facilitative leader must take to ensure a successful reform program. We'll see how training, monitoring and checking progress, and continuing to give staff assistance contribute to a CSR program's progress and help maintain the ever-important focus on teaching and learning.*

[1] These six strategies were identified by SEDL researcher Shirley M. Hord in *Facilitative Leadership: The Imperative for Change* (Austin: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 1992). The six-component framework identified in *Facilitative Leadership* was based on eight categories of actions or interventions of principals and other facilitators who brought about school change that Hord and Leslie Huling-Austin developed from a longitudinal study. The study was discussed in an article written by Hord and Huling-Austin, "Effective Curriculum Implementation: Some Promising New Insights," published in *The Elementary School Journal*, 87(1), 97-115.

Six Strategies for Change IN BRIEF

Developing an atmosphere and context conducive to change — In a school context that encourages change and improvement, there is an atmosphere of trust. In such a context, the professional staff works collaboratively to reflect on their instruction and on how they are working to achieve their goals for students. Principals in these schools pay attention to the concerns of teachers and are never too busy to listen, interact with staff and exhibit interest and support.

Developing and communicating a shared vision — Vision refers to mental pictures of what a school or its parts might look like in a changed and improved state — a preferred image of the future. A compelling vision for a school reflects the values held by individuals in a school and in the school community. The vision should help drive all decisions made at the school.

Planning and providing resources — After the vision is agreed upon, a school must prepare a comprehensive plan to serve as a roadmap to guide teachers and administrators along the path of school reform. How resources (including time, personnel, fiscal resources, materials, and physical space) are allocated at a school should reflect the school's vision and its priorities.

Investing in professional development — School improvement efforts usually require that teachers learn new techniques and/or strategies to change practice. Investing in professional development means the school and district are committed to helping teachers learn new strategies and provide an environment of support that includes time for professional development, opportunities for practice, and follow-up coaching and feedback.

Monitoring and checking progress — Problems and challenges will accompany any school improvement effort, no matter how well planned. Problems can range from classroom management issues to new state mandates to student learning issues. These challenges are not necessarily negative and can result in an improved reform effort, if they are addressed promptly. Monitoring and checking progress incorporates formal and informal methods that may include standardized student testing, examining student data, or frequent principal visits to classrooms.

Continuing to give assistance — As teachers and administrators change their practice and implement new strategies and methodologies to support their school improvement plan, personal and management needs arise from time to time, requiring continuing assistance. As staff members move from novice to expert in their improvement efforts, technical assistance should be structured to accommodate these changes in expertise. Not only do facilitative leaders provide coaching and technical assistance as needed, but they look for and applaud positive progress on the part of each staff member.

Terms Used in this Issue of *Connections*

Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) — A research-based approach to school improvement in which schools focus on meeting the needs of all students. The key word is *comprehensive*; the school improvement plans are not piecemeal but integrate all factors that influence teaching and learning.

Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) program — This federal appropriation assists low-performing schools in implementing effective research-based school improvement models. These models help schools address the needs identified in their school improvement plans. The funding was first appropriated in FY98. State agencies applied for funding, then held competitions in their respective states, making awards of at least $50,000 to the winning schools which had developed comprehensive reform plans.

Facilitative leader — A leader who makes it possible for the school to move forward in the change or reform process by guiding and supporting faculty and staff and by instituting policies and procedures which help them move through the process and meet the needs of all students. There may be numerous facilitative leaders throughout the reform process and these leaders may include others in addition to principals and administrators.

Professional Learning Community (PLC) — An organizational arrangement in a school where teachers and administrators establish collegial relationships to continuously seek and share learning and then act on what they learn in order to enhance their effectiveness as professionals. In a PLC, the principal shares leadership — and thus power and authority — through inviting staff input in decision making. There is also collective learning among staff and application of that learning to solutions that address students' needs. Research literature has shown that effective PLCs also have a shared vision that is developed from the staff's unwavering commitment to students' learning and is consistently articulated and referenced in the staff's work. Effective PLCs also provide coaching, support, assistance, and feedback for teachers.

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Two Examples of the Implementation Process

The story of each of these schools was drawn from several case studies, therefore the characters and names have been fictionalized. The case-study schools were not funded through the CSRD program but were involved in comprehensive school reform.

CASE STUDY

Sierra Vista Elementary

When Suzanne Martinez became the principal at Sierra Vista during the 1994-95 school year, she began to bring the staff together frequently for all-staff meetings where teachers could discuss challenges they faced as well as any classroom successes. Also, she organized faculty study groups. One group spent a great deal of time discussing the school's reading program and led the staff to adopt a new reading program during the first two years that Ms. Martinez was principal. Members of the reading study group received intensive training for the new program and then served as coaches to other teachers as the program was put into place.

Ms. Martinez also began to work with her staff on building a vision and brought parents into the discussions to help shape the environment they wanted for their children's school. The Sierra Vista staff had drafted a vision before they began studying possible comprehensive school reform (CSR) models for their school, and included parents in the research of the reform models. By the time they adopted a reform model, there was a firm vision in place for the school.

Many teachers know the school's vision, a written statement, by heart and all were able to articulate the vision easily. Teachers acknowledged that the school's goals and reform program were based on the vision. Several teachers mentioned that the staff has reflected on the vision annually and has made changes to the original vision. It appears the staff works diligently to carry out the goals that have been agreed upon. One teacher commented, "We are doing this not just for the principal or the reform program, we are doing it for the kids."

Now that the school is well into the implementation process for its reform program, faculty members have begun to meet regularly as a large group to discuss changes being made in curriculum and instruction, to receive training needed to carry out the changes that reform calls for, and to reflect upon how well students are learning. The staff spends a great deal of time analyzing test scores, reading assessments, and other indicators of student achievement. They discuss the data and use it to help individualize instruction for their students.

Teachers at Sierra Vista value Ms. Martinez's support and the opportunities for collaboration that she provides the staff.

A fourth-grade teacher notes, "I think the collaboration that goes on makes this a good school. I feel very supported by the administration and other staff members. There's just that camaraderie. And I feel my ideas are valued." A first-grade teacher remarked, "A teacher who just wants to go in and shut herself in the classroom and work alone will not fit in at our school."

A second-grade teacher described how the Sierra Vista faculty frequently works in groups to critique teaching and improve classroom strategies. "Maybe I will bring a unit to show the others in my group what I did. They are going to look at it critically and maybe praise it or tell me how to polish it. They are going to help me look at what I've done and to help me improve on it. The focus of the group is on kids' work so we can improve our teaching for the kids."

Another Sierra Vista teacher added, "Suzanne makes sure that on a daily basis we're talking about what's working and what things we need to change."

While things may now sound rosy at Sierra Vista, this was not always the case. There were teachers initially resistant to the CSR program, and gradually most of these teachers were won over. It was not an easy process to get everyone on board. Ms. Martinez spent a great deal of time in discussions with those teachers resistant to change; she addressed many of their concerns regarding the program and encouraged them to talk to teachers at other schools that had similar reform programs. She also encouraged them to express their thoughts and ideas for alternate programs during staff discussions. Sierra Vista teachers who were enthusiastic about the reform program also worked to encourage others reluctant to go through the change process.

I think the collaboration that goes on makes this a good school.

One of the major problems in getting Sierra Vista teachers to take on the reform program was convincing them to work the additional hours needed at first without additional compensation. It meant early morning meetings and giving up some weekends. After the first school year, Ms. Martinez was able to convince parents and teachers to lengthen the school day by 15 minutes so students could be let out of school early every other Friday, and teachers could use that free time for planning and meeting. She also reallocated time and money allotted for professional development by the district to be used for necessary training time. Ms. Martinez admitted, however, that she had several teachers who never felt comfortable with the reform program and the additional work time it required—they have moved on to other teaching positions.

After two solid years with the reform program, Sierra Vista's standardized reading test scores have risen, while math is showing some slight improvement. Ms. Martinez happily points to what she considers other indicators of success—teachers collaborating on lessons, coaching each other, and becoming truly excited with the quantifiable increases in student achievement, although not as high as some had hoped. The students seem more eager to learn and have become more enthusiastic about their work, especially reading. "We're on the right track," she says. "We just have to maintain our momentum and continue to focus on how we can help our students learn more than ever."

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- Two Examples of the Implementation Process,
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CASE STUDY

Sunrise Elementary

Without a vision to guide them and lacking a leader who emphasized teamwork, the staff found it difficult to work together as a group.

The staff at Sunrise Elementary has a history of being congenial. Many of the staff members have been at this school for 15-20 years. Groups of teachers get together often after school hours and for the most part, seem to enjoy each other's company. In fact, some of the teachers who have been at the school for a long time enjoy reminiscing about past students and events and even relish passing on school traditions such as an annual end-of-year teacher skit.

Sunrise has seen a succession of four principals during the past 10 years. Carl Davis, the third principal, initiated the reform program. He was committed to making time for the staff to work together collaboratively and ensuring that all staff members had a voice in making decisions related to the school, including decisions regarding curriculum and instruction. Carolyn Smith became the fourth principal at the school about a year and a half ago. Ms. Smith did not want to change things drastically for the faculty at first, so she agreed the reform program should stay in place. Confronted with the additional work a fairly new reform program requires and getting to know her faculty, staff, and students, Ms. Smith admits she has been somewhat overwhelmed.

While some teachers report that Ms. Smith comes and asks for their advice and input on school issues, many do not believe they have a voice in decision making. Grade-level teams usually meet twice a month at Sunrise, and the staff is supposed to meet as a group once a month. However, quite a few teachers report that Ms. Smith does not enforce the regular meetings of teachers, other than when the model developer staff comes for training sessions, and she does not require that grade-level teams report on their progress and decisions.

When asked about their school vision, the staff at Sunrise by and large did not feel there was a vision in place. Although a vision had been established under the leadership of previous principals, the recent change in leadership left teachers feeling adrift. A 10-year veteran Sunrise teacher believed that the teachers individually held a vision of focusing on the students and doing what was best for them. However, she added, "In the last year or two we have had trouble seeing where we are going. Right now I don't think we have a vision. We are stumbling, trying to find it. I feel very frustrated."

Another teacher said, "There used to be a vision. It was very evident, to get kids successful in everything, but that has been pushed back."

Without a vision to guide them and lacking a leader who emphasized teamwork, the staff found it difficult to work together as a group. When collaboration occurred, it was usually among teachers at the same grade level. One fourth-grade teacher from Sunrise commented, "At times we talk about how well our students are learning or what works best with which students, but it is more often with one or two other teachers than as a whole staff." Another described collaboration as the school's weakest point.

Several teachers expressed anxiety about the lack of whole staff meetings to talk about changes being implemented because of the CSR program. One longtime Sunrise teacher, who had always taught in a very traditional way, indicated he was concerned about having to transfer to another school because he felt incompetent when conducting the student-centered lessons and using the technology that were part of the Sunrise's reform program. He also felt uncomfortable developing and teaching in a less structured classroom.

A young teacher who had taught at Sunrise for three years says, "It is a sink-or-swim type of thing. I had to make major mistakes and learn from them. The facilitators [from the model developer's office] help us a lot, but now they only come to our school four times during the year."

These teachers' concerns are related to another issue at Sunrise. Recent changes in leadership have been accompanied by a higher teacher turnover at the school. While this isn't necessarily bad, it has created a problem in that new teachers have not received all of the training provided by the model developer.

Many Sunrise teachers noted that the principal is not very visible on campus and believed the school was becoming very cliquish. One group of teachers has been very vocal about their dislike of the reform program now underway. Several others mentioned that this group does not interact much with other teachers, which is unusual at Sunrise given the congeniality of the staff.

Yet another problem for Sunrise is related to a change in leadership at the district level, too. The superintendent who encouraged the former principal to adopt a comprehensive school reform model and program has moved on to a larger district. The new superintendent is feeling pressure from the state and from the community to raise levels of achievement on the standardized test scores. He has advocated a new math program that he believes should help raise math scores and is beginning to pressure the principals in the district to make an all-out effort to improve all scores.

Ms. Smith observes, "More mandates are now coming from the district than ever before. Some of these district-level decisions conflict with our reform program, including the new math program the district has required all elementary schools to adopt."

Compounding their turmoil, the Sunrise staff was disappointed when they learned during the summer that their students' state-mandated standardized test scores had not improved, even though many believed they had changed instruction for the better. Members of the vocal group of staff opposed to the CSR program began lobbying Ms. Smith to end the program. She agreed that it would be best if they ended the reform effort at mid-term and focused their energies on teaching to the standardized test, to see if that would help improve their scores.

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Creating a Context Conducive to Change

Context Includes Culture, Resources, Relationships, and Rules

Creating a context that supports change may be the most important of the strategies to ensure successful implementation of a school reform program. A school's context encompasses all of its facets:

- culture;
- relationships of people within and outside of the school;
- resources;
- local, state, and federal policies and rules;
- demographics; and
- physical facilities.[1]

Having a context conducive to change and reform helps move a comprehensive school reform program forward. In fact, Dennis Sparks, executive director of the National Staff Development Council, says, "Usually when people begin change efforts, they discover that there are some invisible barriers. And those invisible barriers almost always reside in the context. They reside in the norms and structures of the school that make it more difficult for people to move ahead."[2]

Because of its complexity, creating this context for school change and improvement may be the most difficult step in the implementation process. It involves more than just deciding to implement a comprehensive school reform model or changing the curriculum. Because barriers to reform include teacher isolation and the perception on the part of many teachers that an individual cannot make a difference, it may mean changing organizational and physical structures. And much more difficult, over the long-term it may mean changing the school's culture to provide a supportive atmosphere where trust is pervasive and leadership is shared—a collegial culture where teachers are free to discuss problems and practice, and where continuous learning among the staff is valued.

A Collaborative School Culture Is Needed

Participation in a culture—a collaborative culture—like the one just described, supports the risk taking needed to make changes for school improvement and the struggle inherent in school change and reform.[3]

Michael Fullan, dean of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education who often writes about leadership and change issues, notes that "the process of helping to develop collaborative work cultures is complex. It requires great sophistication on the part of school leaders: to express their own values without being imposing; to draw out other people's values and concerns; to manage conflict and problem solving; to give direction and to be open at the same time."[4]

An effective collaborative culture is the professional learning community (often called a PLC), which has been defined as "a community where teachers engage in reflective dialogue, where there is deprivatization of practice, collective focus on student learning, collaboration, and shared norms and values."[5] PLCs can greatly

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For Discussion or Reflection

Think about how your school has created a context for school change. What else could you do to make the atmosphere more conducive to change?

[1] A basic discussion of school context may be found in *School Context: Bridge or Barrier to Change* written by Victoria Boyd (Austin: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 1992).

[2] SEDL interview with Dennis Sparks, February 2, 2000.

[3] McLaughlin, M. W. and J. E. Talbert (1993). *Contexts that Matter for Teaching and Learning*. Stanford: Center for Research on the Context of Secondary School Teaching, Stanford University.

[4] Fullan, Michael (1992). Visions that Blind. *Educational Leadership* 49 (5), p. 20.

[5] Boyd, V. and S. M. Hord (1994). Schools as Learning Communities. *Issues About Change*, 4(1), 1.

What Principals Can Do to Promote School Change

The role of the principal in school reform is crucial—the principal usually serves as the manager or director of the reform program and, especially at the elementary school level, as instructional leader. Research has shown that the principal's actions and contributions are important to a school change project's overall success. SEDL program manager Shirley Hord says, "Successful school change stories consistently feature the principal as the leader who supplied the human interface—the support and the pressure—for change."

The principal's role in establishing a collaborative culture that encourages change and reform is significant as well, as she is usually the one who must actively develop leadership capacity at the school. The Strategies for Increasing School Success program at SEDL is studying five schools that have become professional learning communities. One of the things that is clear is that the collaborative culture and much of the success at all of the schools were attributed to the principal. At the schools, teachers cited the importance of their principal's empowerment and trust of the teachers and noted the principal's leadership in the professionalization of the faculty.

To ensure successful implementation of a school reform program, the principal must make certain a focus on student learning is maintained. She must also be someone who can lead the school staff and other stakeholders in building a vision and maximizing resources to carry out the job.

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The Superintendent's Role in Creating a Climate for Change

According to SEDL program manager Shirley Hord, superintendents who cultivate a climate for change actively challenge administrators, teachers, and other staff to be innovative and make suggestions for improvement. They also support risk-taking activities by acknowledging that mistakes will be made, but actively acknowledge that mistakes lead to learning.

Hord says that superintendents should spend time and energy managing issues external to the schools, so that an internal change climate may flourish. Superintendents ensure that the district maintains a harmonious environment, one of cooperation and trust.

A superintendent can help build a positive, collaborative culture by

- **having an open-door policy for staff, never being too busy to interact with staff, and showing interest and support;**
- **visiting schools to support staff morale;**
- **being a team player and building coalitions, team work groups, and committees to address issues;**
- **developing district policies and practices that support leadership capacity building, including shared decision making and site-based management;**
- **implementing plans for building leadership capacity, and anticipating role changes and professional development needs; and**
- **being a problem solver by securing rapid solutions to problems and cutting through red tape.**

It is also important that the district give the school the authority and autonomy necessary to implement the reform model. This usually means the school has control over curriculum and instruction materials, personnel issues, professional development, and budget. District support can provide a stabilizing force for schools undergoing reform.

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affect teacher practice—research has shown that learning communities can help teachers make sense of student responses and help them reconcile their ideas regarding what constitutes good practice. Staffs who become PLCs continuously seek and share learning and act on their learning. Student learning becomes their focal point. Says SEDL program manager Shirley Hord, "The learning community focuses directly and incessantly on kids and kids' needs."

It is this focus on the students that can make a huge difference in student learning and help ensure a successful school reform program. As will be discussed below this was a major difference between Sierra Vista and Sunrise Elementaries.

Noted researchers Milbrey McLaughlin and Joan Talbert conducted a five-year study of 16 high schools. They found that differences between successful and unsuccessful schools were attributable to the presence of a professional community among teachers. They also suggest that teachers who work in isolation were least likely to meet the diverse learning needs of high school students.[6]

Hord concurs. "Learning in a social context can be more forceful than learning by yourself. By engaging in collaborative inquiry and reflecting on their practice, teachers can learn to change their practice so that their interaction with all students is more effective."

While the PLC may be the ideal collaborative culture according to Hord, it often takes several years to establish the community. However, by beginning to work toward the establishment of a PLC, a collaborative culture may emerge even though the school may not be a true PLC.

How Did Sierra Vista and Sunrise Measure Up?

So, how well did Sierra Vista and Sunrise schools do in creating a culture for change? Reflecting on the description of Sierra Vista Elementary, we can see the collaborative culture evolving and learn that it is valued. That one teacher mentioned that the Sierra Vista staff discussed on a daily basis what needed to change at the school is telling of how much the school focused on collaboration and change—essential for success in school reform. At Sunrise, the collaborative culture Mr. Davis attempted to develop is eroding because teachers aren't meeting regularly to reflect upon the reforms being initiated and how these reforms affect instruction and learning. It is important to note, too, that the Sunrise teachers' congenial, social relationships are quite different from having collegial relationships that are professional in nature. Collegial faculty relationships are generally based on equality among all staff members and enable staff members to focus on their practice and how students are affected by their practice. Adults in schools who have a collegial relationship: (1) talk about practice; (2) observe each other engaged in the practice of teaching and administration; (3) work together on the curriculum by planning, designing, researching, and evaluating the curriculum; and (4) teach each other about teaching, learning, and leading."[7]

Having congenial relationships on campus, however, can help foster collegial relationships. For collegial relationships to build, a comfort level must be established. Many members of the Sunrise staff were quite comfortable with each other. Had Ms. Smith been more savvy about the importance of collegiality, she could have capitalized on the congeniality of the group to move them toward the professional, open relationships that could encourage the school reform process. Instead, she appeared to play favorites—asking for input from only certain teachers and being swayed by a vocal group at the school.

The differences between Sunrise and Sierra Vista were quite apparent, too, when teachers at the schools talked about their experiences reflecting on student learning and

[6] McLaughlin and Talbert (1993). *Contexts that Matter for Teaching and Learning.*
[7] As quoted in Victoria Boyd (1992), *School Context*, p. 53-54.

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achievement. The Sierra Vista staff met frequently, discussed what was and what was not working in their classrooms, and valued collaborating with colleagues. Sunrise teachers, on the other hand, appeared to be concerned about their students' learning, based on the comment from the veteran teacher at the school who believed teachers had their students' best interests at heart. However, the Sunrise teachers did not have the guidance they needed to reflect on their instruction and the change process.

Advantages of a Collaborative Culture

Having a collaborative culture is advantageous to a school in several ways. The collaborative culture helps schools

- work through concerns throughout the implementation process,
- overcome resistance to change,
- learn from each other's mistakes and accomplishments, and
- develop shared leadership to ensure continuation of the implementation process.

Working through concerns. Establishing a collaborative culture can help move staff through the change process in a number of ways, including helping staff work through concerns they may have about the reform program. At the beginning of a reform program or change, many teachers' concerns may focus on the mechanics of the program. Questions may take the form of, "How is this program supposed to work?" or "How is it different from what we are already doing at our school?" or "What textbooks and materials will this program require?" They may be concerned how the CSR program will affect them personally. These concerns may be expressed by questions such as: "How will the reform program change what I do in my classroom?" "Will it affect my daily classroom schedule?" "Will it mean many additional hours to prepare lessons or attend training?" "How will my performance be evaluated in this program?" They may also be concerned with staffing issues if the CSR program requires a shift in personnel. Generally, the concerns or reservations that focus on getting more information about the program are expressed more easily than their personal concerns. Because of the trust and openness that generally develops when a collaborative culture is established, teachers in this culture may feel more at ease voicing the personal concerns to other faculty members and administrators than in a culture where open group discussion and collaboration with others is not the norm.

It should be noted that a school's having a less collaborative culture does not preclude staff concerns from being addressed; a strong principal will ensure staff concerns are met. This was not the case at Sunrise however. Apparently, most concerns of the teachers were not being addressed. As one teacher mentioned, it was either sink or swim regarding changes they faced in the reform process. There was also the teacher uncomfortable with the technology requirements of the Sunrise CSR program. Had he felt freer to discuss his concerns during a staff meeting, it may have become apparent to Ms. Smith, the principal, that this teacher needed more training, coaching, and feedback to become comfortable with a classroom where students worked in groups on special projects and used the computer. He may also have needed more training in using technology and incorporating it into his lessons.

Encouraging staff resistant to change. Some staff members may be downright resistant to change, and it is important they have a voice as well. The collaborative culture ensures that these staff members are heard. Some change experts stress the need for superintendents and principals to face what John Brown and Cyrelle Moffett call the shadow organization in their book, *The Hero's Journey: How Educators Can Transform Schools and Improve Learning*. The shadow organizations are those informal groups that spring up in schools, where members may play out hidden agendas and sometimes work to foil programs or changes. They write, "the shadow organization represents the unacknowledged and covert patterns of behavior that are in competition with the formal, overt components of a business or educational organization. People in the 'shadow culture' can be called on to provide meaningful contributions to the school improvement process, if they are acknowledged by the formal leadership structure and brought into the dialogue."[8]

Establishing a collaborative culture can help move staff through the change process in a number of ways, including helping staff work through concerns they may have about the reform program.

Likewise Michael Fullan observes, "Reform often misfires because we fail to learn from those who disagree with us. Resistance to a new initiative can actually be highly instructive. Conflict and differences can make a constructive contribution in dealing with complex problems."[9]

Hord stresses that those resistant to change often have personal concerns about some of the changes in practice required by CSR. Their resistance may give way to cooperation once they are given the opportunity to work through concerns and become comfortable with changes. In their book,

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[8] Brown, John, and Cerylle Moffett (1999). *The Hero's Journey: How Educators Can Transform Schools and Improve Learning*. Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, p. 59-60, 72.

[9] Fullan, Michael. (1998). Breaking the Bonds of Dependency. *Educational Leadership*, 55(7), p. 8.

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Creating a Context Conducive to Change,

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Awakening the Sleeping Giant: Leadership Development for Teachers, Katzenmeyer and Moller provide another solution to drawing resisters into the fold. According to the researchers, "There is an advantage to inviting resisters into the mainstream of school change. The dissatisfied or withdrawn teacher may be willing to provide positive leadership if the principal can find an area the teacher really cares about changing."[10]

Had the vocal Sunrise group resistant to the CSR program been able to discuss with everyone else on the staff why they were so opposed to the program, issues may have surfaced that could be easily addressed. At Sierra Vista, there were teachers initially resistant to the program. Through discussions and hearing from others enthusiastic about the program, most of these teachers were eventually won over.

Another factor that may have hindered Sunrise's implementation was the tendency of members who had been at the school for years to keep referring to the past. Called the "golden-age" mythology by researchers Karen Louis and Matthew Miles,[11] this type of thinking can impede reform because it makes it easy for staff members to place the blame for poor school achievement on the community or students. This may be shown by statements such as "Our school used to have students who really wanted to learn" or "When the neighborhood was a good one...." For school changes to be successful, this type of thinking should be replaced with the attitude that it is the staff's responsibility to ensure all students learn, that every individual plays a part in school change.

Learning from mistakes and successes. Getting together as a group and discussing practice and changes made in the classroom provides the opportunity for teachers to learn from mistakes—their own and those of others. "If teachers don't talk about what works and what doesn't, not as much learning occurs," explains SEDL program specialist Tara Leo.

When a school staff gets together regularly, as does Sierra Vista, there is the opportunity to provide feedback as to the positive results of the reform efforts. Seeing success is a critical incentive during implementation.[12] Celebrating even small successes can be crucial to boosting staff morale and provide tangible results that changes are making a difference. Wendell Brown, principal at Anderson Junior High School in Lubbock, Texas, whose school is a CSRD step-ahead school, says, "Celebration is one of the most important things that you can do in that people need to realize the effort they put in is appreciated....Once teachers have been acknowledged for the efforts that they're making, they continue to work."[13]

Initially, the only successes may seem like small ones. From their survey of 178 high schools involved in reform programs, Louis and Miles note, "Programs implemented for less than three years show significantly less impact on student achievement, student attendance, teaching methods, new teachers skills, and student-faculty relations than those that have been in place longer."[14]

Developing shared leadership. Shared leadership—which often emerges when a school has a collaborative culture where teachers actively participate in the decision-making process—has been identified as one of the factors that contributes to school change success. Kenneth A. Leithwood has described this type of leadership as "consensual...a form of power manifested *through* other people, not *over* other people."[15]

When shared leadership is developed, a school or district will be able to sustain reform efforts because there are multiple sources of leadership and enthusiasm; if a school leader should leave, there will be enough momentum and alternate leadership available to continue the reform process. In order to foster shared leadership, school and district leaders must encourage others to assume leadership roles and be able to recognize when staff, parents, and others are ready to take on a leadership role. A collaborative school culture encourages shared leadership because of the equality inherent in such a culture.

At Sierra Vista we saw that Ms. Martinez began to develop teacher leadership capacity as soon as she arrived at the school by forming study groups. In the case of the reading program, she allowed the study group to make decisions about the school's program and help others acquire the training needed for the program. She encouraged other staff members to take a leadership role.

Again and again in school reform literature, a collaborative school culture is highly ranked as necessary to provide the school context needed for the reform and change process, but as Brown and Moffett observe, "We know more about the need for collaborative work cultures in schools than we do about how to create them." They also note that even though creating such a culture is "tough work," it is some of the most important work a school can do.[16]

[10] Katzenmeyer, Marilyn, and Gayle Moller. (1996). *Awakening the Sleeping Giant: Leadership Development for Teachers*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc., p. 35.

[11] Louis, Karen Seashore, and Matthew B. Miles. (1990). *Improving the Urban High School: What Works and Why*. New York: Teachers College Press, p. 186-187.

[12] Fullan, Michael. (1991). *The New Meaning of Educational Change, 2nd Edition*. New York: Teachers College Press.

[13] SEDL interview with Wendell Brown, January 21, 2000.

[14] Louis and Miles. (1990). *Improving the Urban High School*, p. 49.

[15] Leithwood, K. A. (1992). The Move Toward Transformational Leadership. *Educational Leadership*, 49(5), 8-12.

[16] Brown and Moffett (1999). *The Hero's Journey*, p. 107.

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Developing and Communicating the Vision

For schools that have not had a history of working collaboratively, developing the vision for the school may be the beginning of creating a collaborative culture at the school—in other words, the collaborative context may not be in place at a school beginning its reform process, but it may begin to emerge as the school develops a vision.

According to SEDL program manager Shirley Hord, vision refers to mental pictures of what the school or its parts—programs and processes, for example—might look like in a changed and improved state. She acknowledges, "It is a preferred image of the future." In *The Hero's Journey: How Educators Can Transform Schools and Improve Learning*, Brown and Moffett write, "[V]ision becomes the guiding and informing field that brings order and purpose to the complexity that challenges organizations. . . ." [1] According to Peter Block, "A vision is strongly value-laden, alluding optimistically to possibilities of 'greatness.' It's a 'dream created in our waking hours of how we would like the organization to be.'" [2]

Again and again, research cites the principal's role in setting vision for the school as a high priority, but as Michael Fullan, dean of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, observes, a good principal does not singly create a vision nor does he or she impose it; he or she must build a vision with other participants and stakeholders in the school organization. In this way "it becomes common ground, the shared vision that compels all involved." [3] In *Fitting the Pieces: Education Reform that Works*, authors Klein, Medrich, and Perez-Ferreiro note, "When participants perceive that the reform objectives reflect many of their personally held beliefs about education, they are more willing to join in the process." [4]

Vision refers to mental pictures of what the school or its parts—programs and processes, for example—might look like in a changed and improved state.

Reaching consensus means school leaders must work with diverse groups to come to agreement as to what the school should accomplish. It is important for school leaders to realize that these diverse groups may include teachers' unions or other teacher organizations as well as students, teachers, parents, and community members. Sharon Havens, curriculum coordinator for the Lonoke School District in Arkansas, says that "the parents' perspective of what they want to see happening is really critical, and that information is taken and used in the initial assessment of where we are and where we want to be going." [5]

Brown and Moffett note, "Perhaps the most significant thing we have learned is the importance of respectful involvement of all stakeholders in the vision quest, including students, parents, and community members. Without their involvement, our visions become mandates without meaning. Our stakeholders feel discounted and marginalized. The result is a lack of understanding and commitment from those whose support we need most." [6] So, unless there is consensus among teachers, administrators, parents, and the community, the reform process may be difficult to sustain.

Once the vision has been agreed upon, it is the principal's role, however, to keep reminding stakeholders of the vision. School leaders must communicate and articulate "compelling images of what an organization wants to create, sharing pictures of the future that foster genuine commitment." [7]

Dennis Sparks, executive director of the National Staff Development Council, says, "Throughout the school year and around the school building there should be continual reminders of the mission—of high levels of student learning that the school is working on. You should see that displayed in hallways, you should hear it in faculty meetings, you should hear it at parent meetings." [8]

The vision must also be translated into plans and actions. The values and goals articulated in the vision will determine how staff spends their time, what problems they solve, and how resources are distributed. [9]

Louis and Miles write, "The process of spreading the vision is, however, less dependent on the articulateness and persuasiveness of the individual than on his or her willingness to structure opportunities for all interested faculty to discuss their aspirations for the change program and the school, and to be patient in trusting that staff members will take on the collective responsibility for refining the vision through shared action." They also observe, "Visions become strong not because faculty believe in the principal, but because they believe in themselves and their ability to *really*

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[1] Brown, John, and Cerylle Moffett (1999). *The Hero's Journey: How Educators Can Transform Schools and Improve Learning*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, p. 85.

[2] Block, Peter. (1987). *The Empowered Manager: Positive Political Skills at Work*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. As quoted in Louis, Karen Seashore, and Matthew B. Miles, *Improving the Urban High School: What Works and Why*. New York: Teachers College Press, p. 219.

[3] Mendez-Morse, Sylvia. 1992. *Leadership Characteristics that Facilitate School Change*. Austin: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, p. 15.

[4] Klein, Steven, Elliott Medrich, and Valeria Perez-Ferreiro. (1996). *Fitting the Pieces: Education Reform that Works*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

[5] SEDL interview with Sharon Havens, January 21, 2000.

[6] Brown, John L., and Cerylle A. Moffett. (1999). *The Hero's Journey*, p. 87.

[7] Hord, Shirley M. (1992). *Facilitative Leadership: The Imperative for Change*. Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, p. 70.

[8] SEDL interview with Dennis Sparks, February 2, 2000.

[9] *Critical Issue: Building a Collective Vision* on the Web site of the North Central Educational Laboratory at http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/educatrs/leadrshp/le100.htm.

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Developing and Communicating a Vision

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change schools for the better."[10]

Brown and Moffett also believe that personal responsibility plays a large part in the enactment of a vision. They write, "[E]ach of us must assume personal responsibility for translating vision to action. We cannot wait for others to do it for us, nor can we take shelter in scapegoating."[11]

In their study of high schools, Louis and Miles found that vision was spread through empowerment—in schools with a collaborative culture, that had committees that saw to implementation issues, real ownership of the vision evolved.

How Did Sierra Vista and Sunrise Measure Up in Creating a Vision?

One of the major problems at Sunrise was the vision. Although a vision had been established, the recent change in leadership left teachers feeling adrift. A couple of teachers who had been at the school many years believed that in the past the teachers held a vision of focusing on the students and doing what was best for them, but she did not feel like there was a current vision for the school.

At Sierra Vista, there was definitely a vision for change, and one that reflected input from parents as well as faculty. The fact that most teachers were able to discuss the vision easily is evidence of how it was kept before them. Teachers acknowledged that the school's goals were based on the vision and several teachers mentioned that the staff reflects on the statement each year, sometimes making amendments, ensuring that the vision is an evolving one.

The importance of the vision cannot be overstated. It is the foundation for the school's future and all decisions regarding instruction, resources, and professional development should be held to the test: Does this decision help us reach our vision?

[10] Louis, Karen Seashore, and Matthew B. Miles (1990). *Improving the Urban High School: What Works and Why*. New York: Teachers College Press, p. 327.

[11] Brown and Moffett. (1999). *The Hero's Journey*, p. 87.

Planning and Providing Resources

Administrators may face difficult decisions related to reallocating resources—including human resources—to support school reform. "A plan for school improvement will be no stronger than the allocation of resources that are attached to the plan," observes National Staff Development Council executive director Dennis Sparks.[1]

Creating and maintaining a focus on improvements in teaching and learning will likely require major evaluations and shifts in how monetary resources are used, how personnel are distributed, and which programs are supported. The school district can play an important role in making certain schools have the resources and flexibility needed to implement the reform process. Ed Tobia, program associate in SEDL's CSRD program, says it is imperative that the central office has personnel who are familiar with the reform model that is being adopted by a school, and who understand the model's requirements and its role in the school's overall reform program. For example, the curriculum coordinator of a medium-sized school district, admits that she often "runs interference," convincing the superintendent of a school's need to reallocate resources to meet the needs of its reform program.

Superintendents can help principals coordinate the funds they already receive, such as Goals 2000 money, Title I allocations, Title VII funding, and state staff development funding. Superintendents and principals must often seize resource opportunities quickly and be aware of all the options available to them by thinking "outside of the box." Karen Louis and Matthew Miles advise that "congruence with vision is the critical screen," and that it is important to view assistance and coordination as ways to maximize resources. They write, "Good assistance and coordination will lead to better decisions on staffing, educational practices, and materials—and to a more productive process."[2]

Personnel

Allen Odden, a professor of educational administration, stresses that effective resource allocation may be a two-to-four year process, and suggests that schools analyze which personnel are necessary to implement a reform program.[3] He notes that "Traditional schools have additional staff members, who, over time, have come to be assumed as necessary to run a school."

To support the new instructional focus that is being undertaken, a reform program may require the school to reallocate resources that have supported aides, paraprofessionals, and other specialists. This is often difficult to do because it means potentially giving up staff members, such as aides and specialists who are well liked and whose roles have been valued, to make room for new positions needed by a reform program, such as on-site facilitators or coordinators, or to acquire funds to implement a reform model. Also, many of the national models rely on inclusion of all students in a regular classroom, doing away with many of the positions such as Title I reading or math teacher.

Time

Time is often the resource scarcest to schools and the resource most difficult to obtain. Says Hord, "One problem schools face is they do not have time to do the kind of work needed to implement reform. We expect that they'll be flying the plane and designing and building it at the same time. Finding time for planning and implementing change is a real barrier, a real problem."

Compounding the problem is that time needed for reform may conflict with district rules and regulations, parent and educator expectations, and collective bargaining agreements. It is a necessity, however, to provide teachers with time for adequate professional development, time to reflect upon the changes required for comprehensive school reform, and time to engage in collegial

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relationships. Katzenmeyer and Moller write, "If the time spent in meetings on school change is productive and fulfilling for teachers, they will contribute toward school reform." They point out that productive meetings aren't accidental, but "are the result of someone taking time to plan carefully for expected outcomes."[4]

If the time spent in meetings on school change is productive and fulfilling for teachers, they will contribute toward school reform.

Schools involved in comprehensive school reform across the country have found they must be creative to meet the challenges of finding time for school reform. Some secondary schools have added as much as an hour and a half a day to their schedules to effectively increase instructional time by about 30 days a year. Others report extending their school hours 15-30 minutes a day in order to have a regularly scheduled early release day to spend time as a staff planning and discussing changes and to allow time for professional development. A word of warning, however: when districts and schools challenge well-established structures such as the hours of school operation, they are advised to involve all stakeholders in making the decisions.

Another option is for schools to make room in their budgets to hire substitutes for teacher release time; still other schools rely on a combination of substitutes and parent volunteers to provide teacher release time. The Clover Park School District in Washington state reallocated resources so that teachers could be paid $20 an hour during the summer to attend professional development sessions, thereby eliminating some of the need to take time during the school year for reform efforts.

Many schools rely on teachers volunteering their own time to dedicate to reform efforts. While this may work for a while, teachers may end up feeling resentful and burned out. Even at a school considered a "model" school in school reform literature—Hollibrook Elementary in Spring Branch, Texas—teachers remarked that they were often burned out despite their many successes.[5]

A different time problem arises when new teachers come on board after a school's reform program is well underway. Many programs lack a plan for bringing these teachers up to speed, which can present a problem for the principal who must see to it that the new faculty are properly trained while being thrust into the middle of the program.

How Did Sierra Vista and Sunrise Measure Up in Resource Allocation?

Looking back at Sunrise Elementary, we see that the district office was often working against the school. Because of turnover in district office staff, the school lost its advocate for the reform project. There were no provisions made to provide time for teachers to spend on reform. At Sierra Vista Elementary, we see that although resource allocation was rocky at first because teachers did not have the time needed for reform, Ms. Martinez was able to overcome obstacles of time and money and successfully marshal the resources she needed for CSR.

As one superintendent advises, "Resources are everywhere," he says, "but you must be flexible and efficient in how you use them."

[1] SEDL interview with Dennis Sparks, February 2, 2000.

[2] Louis and Miles. (1990). *Improving the Urban High School: What Works and Why*. New York: Teachers College Press, p. 258.

[3] Odden, Allen. *How to Rethink School Budgets to Support School Transformation*. New American Schools Web site, publications "How To" series at http://www.naschools.org/resource/publications.html

[4] Katzenmeyer, Marilyn, and Gayle Moller. (1996). *Awakening the Sleeping Giant*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc., p. 67.

[5] For example, see Jane McCarthy and Suzanne Still, "Hollibrook Accelerated Elementary School" in Murphy, Joseph and Philip Hallinger (1993). *Restructuring Schooling: Learning from Ongoing Reform Efforts*, p. 63-83 and *The Uses of Time for Teaching and Learning: Studies of Education Reform* (1996). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education Office of Education Research and Improvement.

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Networking Begins at <http://www.CSRDweb.net>

By Lacy Wood

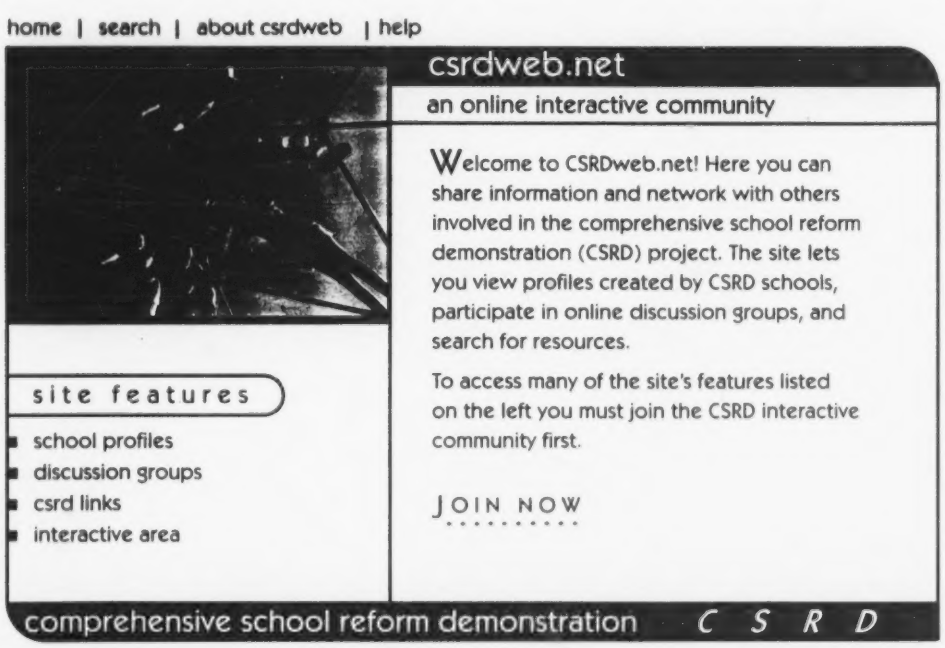
In addition to SEDL's CSRD web site, CSRD school leadership teams and educators interested in comprehensive school reform can look to http://www.CSRDweb.net for networking and resource opportunities. This new site is a collaborative effort of the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Network to provide CSRD grantees the opportunity to become part of an online community.

The site has two main features: a school profile database where CSRD grantees can create profiles detailing reform efforts and an online discussion group forum.

Educators can use the site's multiple search features to find schools that have created profiles or search for resources found on the 10 REL web sites and the U.S. Department of Education web site. The profiles can be searched in multiple ways, such as by national reform model or by similar school populations.

The discussion groups cover topics that CSRD schools may find of interest—reallocating resources, evaluation, and English language learners—and are moderated by individuals knowledgeable about the topics. A few experts have been invited to subscribe to the groups and contribute their expertise as well.

To create a school profile or to join the moderated discussion groups you must join the interactive community first. This involves following a few easy steps accessible from the home page. All visitors can read the school profiles and search CSRD web sites of federally funded resource providers through csrdweb.net.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csrdweb.net
an online interactive community
Welcome to CSRDweb.net! Here you can share information and network with others involved in the comprehensive school reform demonstration (CSRD) project. The site lets you view profiles created by CSRD schools, participate in online discussion groups, and search for resources.
To access many of the site's features listed on the left you must join the CSRD interactive community first.
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"Strategies for Change: Implementing a Comprehensive School Reform Program" will be continued in our next issue.

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